

Message Text

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S E C R E T JIDDA 4358

DEPARTMENT PASS CAIRO

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, XF, SA

SUBJECT: LATEST ARAB-ISRAELI HOSTILITIES AND FUTURE TRENDS
IN MIDDLE EAST

SUMMARY: A CEASEFIRE SHOULD SOON BE REACHED BETWEEN
THE ARABS AND ISRAEL AND WITHOUT USG ACTIONS THAT WOULD
CAUSE THE ARABS TO BLAME US NOW FOR ACTIVE ONESIDEDNESS.
IF THIS CAN BE DONE, A NUMBER OF HOPEFUL POSSIBILITIES
MAY LIE AHEAD: ARAB ARMIES SHOWED A VIGOR AND PER-
SISTENCE THAT MAY HAVE SURPRISED THE IDF AND PROBABLY
THE ARAB PUBLIC ALSO; ISRAEL MIGHT BE MORE AMENABLE TO
PEACE CONCESSIONS IF THE PROSPECTS ARE FOR EVEN MORE
TRYING RETURN BOUTS EVERY FIVE OR TEN YEARS. THE
ARABS MAY PROVE MORE REASONABLE IN CASE OF A WIN OR
DRAW THAN AFTER THE DEBACLES OF PREVIOUS YEARS.

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BOTH SIDES WILL BE EXHAUSTED BY THE WAR AND IN A STATE
OF MUCH REDUCED ARMAMENT. SOVIET INFLUENCE IS NOT LIKELY
TO RUSH AGAIN INTO THE ARAB SCENE AS IT DID IN 1967.
THE ARAB COMBATANTS, MOREOVER, WILL NEED MASSIVE AMOUNTS

OF ECONOMIC-DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE, MOST EASILY OBTAINABLE BY WINNING THE FAVOR OF THE CONSERVATIVE OIL-RICH NATIONS OF THE PENINSULA AND THE GULF. ON ISRAEL'S EASTERN FRONTIER, JORDAN (IF IT STAYS OUT OF THE FIGHTING) MAY STAND AS THE STRONGEST ARAB MILITARY POWER, A BARRIER TO RADICAL INFLUENCE, AND A RESPONSIBLE AND VALUED INTERLOCUTOR IN A JORDANIAN-ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN SETTLEMENT. THE FEDAYEEN MOVEMENT MIGHT EMERGE WEAKER AND LESS SIGNIFICANT EVEN THAN IT WAS BEFORE THE OUTBREAK OF THE FIGHTING. THE FIGHTING SHOWS, FINALLY, THAT MIDDLE EAST TENSIONS DO NOT HAVE THEIR SOURCE IN COLD-WAR ISSUES, AND THAT SOLUTIONS MUST BE FOUND IN TERMS OF LOCAL ISSUES THEMSELVES.

END SUMMARY.

1. IT MAY BE PREMATURE BUT STILL WORTHWHILE AT THIS STAGE IN THE FIGHTING TO HAZARD A GUESS ABOUT THE EFFECT IT WILL HAVE UPON ESTABLISHED ATTITUDES THAT THE ARABS AND THE ISRAELIS HAVE HAD TOWARD EACH OTHER AND TOWARD THEMSELVES. THE ARAB ARMIES, WHETHER THEY ACHIEVE A STANDSTILL CEASEFIRE OR ARE EVENTUALLY DRIVEN BACK TO THE CEASEFIRE LINES OF JUNE 1967 HAVE SHOWN A COMBATIVENESS SO FAR THAT MAY HAVE SURPRISED THE ISRAELIS, AND (ALTHOUGH THEY WOULD NEVER ADMIT IT) PROBABLY THE ARAB PUBLICS AS WELL. THE COMPLEXES THAT BOTH SIDES HAVE LIVED WITH MIGHT HENCEFORTH BE DIMINISHED: THE ISRAELIS THAT THEY ARE SUPERHUMAN, THE ARABS THAT THEY ARE SUBHUMAN.

2. IT APPEARS THE GOI WILL BE ABLE TO REDRESS THE MILITARY BALANCE, OR AT LEAST SATISFACTORILY CONTAIN THE ARAB MILITARY THREAT. THIS MUST BE DONE, HOWEVER, WITHOUT THE UNITED STATES ASSOCIATING ITSELF WITH ISRAELI POSITIONS IN A MANNER THAT WOULD PROVOKE THE ARABS DAMAGE OUR INTERESTS IN THE MIDEAST AND DIMINISH THE EFFECTIVENESS OF OUR GOOD OFFICES IN A POSTWAR SITUATION. THE ARABS HAVE SHOWN UNUSUAL MATURITY TO DATE IN NOT UNIVERSALIZING THE CONFLICT BY THEIR RHETORIC; WE SHOULD NOT GIVE THEM AN EXCUSE TO DO SO.

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3. THE ARABS HAVE SHOWN MATURITY AS WELL -- OR AT LEAST INDEPENDENCE -- IN EMBARKING UPON LATEST ROUND OF HOSTILITIES WITHOUT HANGING BY ONE ARM TO COMMUNIST APRON-STRINGS (AND WITH LESS OF THE HAIR-RAISING ORATORICAL THREATS OF PREVIOUS CAMPAIGNS). IF A STANDOFF OF SOME SORT IS REACHED, PERHAPS WITH A U.S. AND EUROPEAN ASSIST, THE AREA SITUATION WILL NOT BE ONE IN WHICH THE SOVIETS CAN AUTOMATICALLY COUNT UPON MOVING BACK IN WITH INCREASED MILITARY AND POLITICAL INFLUENCE. THIS MAY BE ESPECIALLY TRUE SINCE (A) THE SOVIETS WILL IN THE FUTURE BE AWARE THAT THEIR ARMS PROGRAMS HAVE NOT OBTAINED FOR THEM THE DEGREE OF INFLUENCE OVER THE POLICIES OF SYRIA AND EGYPT THAT THEY SOUGHT, AND (B) BOTH SYRIA AND EGYPT

MIGHT BE RELUCTANT TO BURDEN THEIR POSTWAR ECONOMIES WITH THE ENORMOUS LOAD OF DEBT REQUIRED TO REFURBISH A MODERN MILITARY MACHINE. IN THIS SENSE, WE SEE IN THE MIDDLE EAST A KIND OF RAPID MULTILATERAL DISARMAMENT PROCEEDING AMONG ALL PARTIES TO BE IN CONFLICT.

4. IF A HALT CAN BE BROUGHT TO THE FIGHTING WHILE THE COMBATANTS ARE EXHAUSTED, AND ARM-WEARY, THE U.S. AND OTHER MODERATES IN THE AREA COULD HAVE AN UNUSUAL OPPORTUNITY TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE SHAPE OF A FUTURE PEACE. ISRAEL PRESUMABLY MAY FEEL, GIVEN APPROPRIATE U.S. GUARANTEES, THAT SOME CONCESSIONS TO THE ARABS MIGHT BE IN ORDER. DO THE ISRAELIS--DESPITE AN UNDERSTANDABLE DESIRE FOR REVENGE--LOOK FORWARD TO SIMILAR, OR EVEN MORE HARD-FOUGHT ENCOUNTERS WITH THE ARABS EVERY FIVE OR TEN YEARS? ON THE ARAB SIDE, THE EGYPTIANS AND SYRIANS MIGHT BE MORE PSYCHOLOGICALLY DISPOSED TO ACCEPT A "JUST" SOLUTION THAN IN THE PAST AFTER WHAT WE CAN HOPE IS THE CATHARSIS OF THE RECENT FIGHTING. (ARABS ARE FAMOUSLY BAD LOSERS, BUT BETTER IN CASE OF A WIN OR DRAW.) EGYPT AND SYRIA, MOREOVER, WILL BADLY NEED MASSIVE ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE AFTER THE FIGHTING ENDS, AND THE INFLUENCE UPON THEM, THEREFORE, OF THE OIL-RICH CONSERVATIVE ARAB NATIONS MAY BE CONSIDERABLE. IN ADDITION, IF JORDAN CAN STAY OUT OF THE FIGHTING, THE GOJ SHOULD EMERGE AS THE STRONGEST ARAB MILITARY POWER. JORDAN COULD THUS SERVE TO CHECK INCIPIENT RADICAL TRENDS IN
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AN IMPUISSANT SYRIA, AND BY ITS PROVEN HISTORY OF GOOD BEHAVIOR DESERVE ISRAELI RECOGNITION AS A VALUED, AND VALID, INTERLOCUTOR IN PEACE NEGOTIATIONS.

5. ANOTHER HOPEFUL NOTE MIGHT BE THAT THE FEDAYEEN MOVEMENT SHOULD EMERGE FROM THE FIGHTING WITH A GREATLY DECREASED STATUS AND REPUTATION. FEDAYEEN POPULARITY AND INFLUENCE, AFTER ALL, CAN LARGELY BE ATTRIBUTED TO THEIR HAVING PROVIDED THE ARAB WORLD WITH AN EGO-LIFTING INTERMISSION WHILE THE ARAB STATES SEEMED HELPLESS AT THE CONVENTIONAL MILITARY LEVEL. NOW THAT THE PRINCIPALS HAVE RETURNED TO THE STAGE AND EXERTED EXTRAORDINARY EFFORTS ON THEIR OWN BEHALF, THE STATUS OF ARAFAT AND OTHER FEDAYEEN LEADERS WILL DWINDLE.

6. A FINAL GOOD RESULT OF THE FIGHTING MIGHT BE TO DISPEL MISCONCEPTIONS IN WESTERN CIRCLES THAT SOVIET DESIGNS AND PRESSURES UNDERLIE THE INSTABILITY OF MIDEAST POLITICS. THE LATEST ROUND OF FIGHTING CLEARLY DID NOT RESULT FROM SOVIET URGINGS, AND THE SOVIETS HAVE DONE THEIR BEST TO DISTANCE THEMSELVES FROM IT. THE FIGHTING HAD ITS ORIGINS IN TENSIONS BETWEEN ISRAEL AND THE ARAB STATES, AND IT IS TO THESE TENSIONS

THAT POSTWAR EFFORTS PERMANENTLY TO SOLVE THE
PROBLEM MUST ADDRESS THEMSELVES.

7. LIKELY EFFECTS OF A DELAYED CEASEFIRE, ESPECIALLY
IF ACCOMPANIED BY RENEWED ARAB HUMILATION WILL FOLLOW
SEPTTEL.
HORAN

NOTE BY OCT: NOT PASSED CAIRO.

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